When districts learn from successes and challenges, they can increase the effectiveness of SEL implementation by integrating what they learn into ongoing SEL strategic planning and support.

**Make Improvements to the Action Plan**

Below you’ll find an overview of: WHAT high-quality implementation looks like, WHY it’s important, WHEN to engage in this key activity, and WHO to involve. Also see the PROCESS page for step-by-step guidance on how to engage in the work, and the RESOURCES page for additional tools to support your efforts.

**What does it mean to make improvements to the district’s SEL action plan?**

As part of high-quality SEL continuous improvement, districts work with staff, students, families, and community partners to alter or update plans based on what was learned through data reflection (see Key Activity: Reflect on Progress Toward Annual SEL Goals) and share with the larger district community what was learned and how that will inform the district’s next steps.
This process will help districts use conclusions from data reflection to determine next steps and create action plans and share these with key stakeholders. It also involves providing support to school teams for data-informed action planning, progress towards achieving desired outcomes with their stakeholders, and assessing current levels of implementation.

**Focus Area 1: Build Foundational Support and Plan**

- From data reflection, determine next steps and create action plans and involve providing support to school teams for data-informed action planning progress and progress towards achieving desired outcomes with their stakeholders. Assess your current level of implementation.

**Focus Area 2: Strengthen Adult SEL Competencies and Capacity**

- Build on successes.

**Focus Area 3: Promote SEL for Students**

- Reflect on progress towards annual SEL goals, identify SEL strategies that include districtwide or school-level strategies and practices that made significant progress towards implementation, and likely want to stick with successful strategies to maintain those gains and even explore whether they can be expanded to other schools or areas of implementation.

When determining which strategies to continue, determine what specifically led to success and take steps to ensure areas of strength are sustained and leveraged in the future. For example, areas of strength may be related to effective people or teams, supportive school climate, collaborating partners, or tools and resources that were employed.

### 2. Determine where and how to overcome challenges.

In areas where you experienced challenges or didn’t make expected progress on implementation or outcomes, you’ll want to examine what happened to determine how to adjust your efforts.

If you did not make expected progress (See Key Activity: Reflect on Progress Toward Annual SEL Goals), consider whether you will:

- **Stick with the same implementation goals and try different strategies to overcome previous obstacles.**
  
  For example, your district may have intended to design and implement an SEL professional learning program for schools by developing a comprehensive menu of professional learning and providing opportunities for schools to learn from each other (achieving a score of “3” on the professional learning rubric item). Through discussion with school leaders, you learn that they struggled to release staff to attend since sessions were held during the school day and not enough substitutes were available. You may want to adjust your strategy by offering a mix of after-school and virtual professional learning opportunities and offering the option of allocating district funds for extended day pay or substitute pay.

- **Change your implementation focus.**
  
  Alternatively, you may hear from school-level stakeholders that they are inundated with requests for professional learning from different central office departments. You may decide that the time is not right for focusing on the SEL professional learning program until you’ve first prioritized cross-departmental collaboration (see Focus Area 1, Key Activity: Collaboration). Your district may then return to focus on SEL professional learning when you can do so in coordination with other departments.

Sometimes circumstances change within a district from the start to the end of a year, and what seemed achievable in the fall may not seem feasible the following spring. This may be due to a change in senior leadership, budget cuts, or departmental restructuring. When this is the case, the district should acknowledge this change in circumstance, describe what they learned from their efforts, and determine whether they need to shift focus or engage in other key activities that would better prepare the district to make progress on SEL implementation.

If you did make progress on your implementation goals, but implementation did not lead to expected outcomes, consider:

- **Were your implementation goals the right match for your outcome goals?**
For example, if your outcome goal was to increase staff capacity and confidence in SEL implementation, you may have focused your implementation goals on implementing a professional learning program (See Focus Area 2, Key Activity: Professional Learning). However, after discussion with teachers and students, you may learn that it would also be helpful to adopt SEL standards (Focus Area 3, Key Activity: SEL Standards) so there is a shared understanding of what SEL looks like across the district and for different grade bands. Or maybe you will hear from school counselors and principals that they need support to identify and allocate resources for an evidence-based program (Key Activity: Evidence-Based Programs and Practices) to help scaffold and structure how school staff implement SEL.

- Were your outcome goals realistic?
  Sometimes your district may have implemented according to plan and made great progress but still fell short of ambitious outcome goals. You may want to extend your timeline for achieving the goal or revise the goal to reflect a more realistic one-year outcome.

3. Share learnings and plans for next steps with stakeholders.

By this point, your district has completed a year-long SEL continuous improvement cycle, which began when you identified your goals and strategies for the year (Focus Area 1: Organize); executed your plan and documented implementation throughout the year (Focus Area 2 and 3: Implement); and compiled and reflected on data and made decisions about adjustments to next year’s plan based on what you’ve learned (Focus Area 4: Improve).

Now it’s time to tell stakeholders what you’ve learned and how you’ve planned adjustments for the upcoming year. Districts may approach sharing with stakeholders in a variety of ways, including through a brief annual report or through a public presentation. The specific approach you take depends on your intended audience, their level of engagement, and how you think they will best engage with the information.

Regardless of approach, here are a few recommended areas to consider including in a report to stakeholders:

- Overview of SEL, history of commitment made by district
- Progress made to date in the broader effort
- Overview of implementation and outcome goals for the most recent year
- Introduction of the types of data collected, analyzed, and reported
- Summary of implementation and outcome data
- How stakeholders were engaged in the reflection process, and who was involved
- Key learnings, conclusions, and next steps

Here are examples of districts’ reports to stakeholders:

- Austin ISD 2013-2014 SEL Update
- Washoe County School District’s Annual Data Summits and SEL Data webpage

Here are summaries of learnings across CASEL’s Collaborating Districts Initiative:

- CASEL’s report summarizing key findings from the Collaborating Districts Initiative
- Evaluation of districtwide SEL implementation by American Institute for Research (AIR)

4. Support school teams with data-informed action planning and communication about progress with their school community.
In addition to districtwide action planning and communications, it’s important to engage school teams in a similar process of using what they’ve learned this past year to inform next steps. You may want to bring school leaders or teams together to share their learnings, collaboratively make meaning of data trends among schools, and discuss how they will move forward and what support they would like from the district.

The CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL provides a parallel, school-level process and tools for collecting and reflecting on data for continuous improvement and strengthening an action plan. The action planning process is described in detail in the Create a Plan section, and additional school-level tools for using data can be found in the Continuous Improvement section.

You can also support schools in identifying their own key stakeholders and crafting a plan for communicating their SEL progress. Here’s a communication planning tool from the CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL that may be helpful.

5. Launch a new year-long continuous improvement cycle for SEL.

Implementing SEL districtwide is not a one-time process. As one year-long cycle of continuous improvement ends, another is launched to continuously iterate and build on your efforts. Your approach to implementation throughout this coming year should be informed and influenced by the successes, challenges, and learnings of the previous year.

To launch a new continuous improvement cycle, you’ll refine your plans into clear goals and action steps (see Focus Area 1, Key Activity: Shared Vision and Plan). This time around, your district has the benefit of building on new knowledge and practical experience from the previous year to inform your SEL action plan to reach new or revised SEL goals.
Below, you'll find resources to help share with stakeholders and take action.

**Resources**

- **TAGS**
  - student leadership
  - continuous improvement
  - youth voice

**SOURCE:** Chicago Public Schools

**Focus Area 1**

**Build Foundational Support and Plan**

- 1 stakeholders and take action.

**Focus Area 2**

**Strengthen Adult SEL Competencies and Capacity**

- **Focus Area 3**
  **Promote SEL for Students**

- focus around action planning

**Focus Area 4**

**Reflect on Data for Continuous Improvement**

- Science & Civic Engagement put together this toolkit for district schools to build resources to support schools at all places on the spectrum of student voice and engagement.

**SOURCE:** Chicago Public Schools

**TAGS**
- research brief
- conducting local SEL research
- continuous improvement

**The Continuous Improvement Journey: Where Are We now and Where Do We Want To Go?**

This brief offers a case study focused on Guilford County Schools in North Carolina, to illustrate the experience of a research-practice partnership between CASEL researchers and the district and the use of goal-setting, data, and reflection for continuous improvement.

**SOURCE:** CASEL

**TAGS**
- research brief
- conducting local SEL research
- continuous improvement

**SEL: Best Practices and Barriers to Successful Implementation**

From Austin Independent School District's Department of Research and Evaluation, this report shares findings from district case studies that underscore the importance of four key themes that influence the quality and sustainability of SEL implementation.

**SOURCE:** Austin Independent School District

**TAGS**
- implementation support
- conducting local SEL research
- implementation monitoring
- implementation evaluation

**Making SEL Assessment Work: Ten Practitioner Beliefs**

The National Practitioner Advisory Group, convened by CASEL and AIR as part of the work of the Assessment Work Group, share a statement of 10 beliefs about assessing SEL, actions to achieve each belief, and reflection questions for leadership teams.

**SOURCE:** Assessment Work Group

**TAGS**
- student assessment
- define SEL metrics
- assessment
SEL Trends: Empowering Youth Voice
From CASEL’s SEL Trends series, this issue describes ways that Chicago, Cleveland and Washoe County school districts have recognized students as experts of the school experience and built structures for students to better influence school and district decisions and practices.

SOURCE: CASEL
TAGS social studies  SEL partnerships  student leadership  youth voice

Social Emotional Learning: Goal-Setting and Relationships are Part of District’s Academic Core (video)
Washoe County School District is featured in this video from Edweek, describing the district’s process for developing SEL metrics for instructional purposes and growth.

SOURCE: Washoe County School District
TAGS student assessment  videos  assessment  continuous improvement

Sacramento City Districtwide SEL Program Inventory
This is an example of a third-party report on SEL programs and practices throughout the district, shared by Sacramento City, including a site level inventory as well as findings and recommendations regarding implementation and monitoring.

SOURCE: Sacramento City Unified School District
TAGS assessment  evidence-based programs  data dashboards  conducting local SEL research  continuous improvement  implementation monitoring  implementation evaluation

RELATED RESOURCES

SEL Inventory – Elementary Interview
This interview protocol was used by evaluators at elementary school sites in Sacramento City to gather baseline data on the implementation of SEL programs and practices. Includes handouts that were provided to interviewees.

SOURCE: Sacramento City Unified School District
TAGS assessment  evidence-based programs  school visit/observation tool  elementary school grades  data dashboards  conducting local SEL research  implementation monitoring  implementation evaluation

SEL Inventory – Secondary Interview
This interview protocol was used by evaluators at secondary school sites in Sacramento City to gather baseline data on the implementation of SEL programs and practices. Includes handouts that were provided to interviewees.

SOURCE: Sacramento City Unified School District
TAGS middle school grades  high school grades  assessment  evidence-based programs  school visit/observation tool  data dashboards  conducting local SEL research  implementation monitoring  implementation evaluation
SEL Department and Specialist Logic Model to Improve District SEL Implementation

Describes the purpose, goals, and activities of Austin's SEL Specialists -- good tool for a district team that is lobbying for the creation of new SEL-focused positions.

SOURCE: Austin Independent School District

Find ready-to-use tools

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| **Student SEL Data Reflection Protocol**  
Student perspective is essential for understanding district data and making equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive decisions. This tool presents a student-led, structured process for students to reflect on school and district data in partnership with adults, to observe trends and discuss ideas for improvement of SEL implementation.  

SOURCE: CASEL  
TAGS: continuous improvement, implementation monitoring, implementation evaluation, youth voice |

| **Establish Norms for Data-Informed Conversations**  
This tool includes ways for facilitators to establish a space for safe and productive collaboration and recommended norms to ensure that the conversation is inclusive of all voices and results in concrete next steps.  

SOURCE: CASEL  
TAGS: community partnerships, continuous improvement, youth voice |

| **Districtwide SEL Action Planning Workbook (APW)**  
Once district leaders have built a shared understanding of SEL, teams can use this workbook to organize priorities and goals and build a robust action plan to guide their work and exploration of the District Resource Center.  

SOURCE: CASEL  
TAGS: define SEL metrics, implementation plan, continuous improvement, planning |

| **Develop Annual Goals and Action Plan for SEL**  
This tool is designed to help district SEL teams develop goals and an action plan for a single year of districtwide SEL implementation. It builds on a district's shared vision, long-term SEL goals, and SEL implementation roadmap.  

SOURCE: CASEL  
TAGS: define SEL metrics, implementation plan, continuous improvement, planning |
MeasuringSEL: Use Data
From CASEL's Measuring SEL practitioner resources, this page provides details and examples of how districts have used SEL data from formative or summative assessment for continuous improvement.

SOURCE: CASEL

TAGS student assessment define SEL metrics equity assessment conducting local SEL research implementation monitoring implementation evaluation youth voice

Develop Long-Term Goals for Districtwide SEL
This tool explains how to set long-term SMARTIE-style goals for districtwide SEL implementation. Provides guidelines to get the committee started, step-by-step instructions for defining goals that reflect the district's shared vision, and examples.

SOURCE: CASEL

TAGS define SEL metrics continuous improvement implementation evaluation planning

Data Sources to Analyze SEL Implementation and Outcomes
Use this tool as you consider what kind of data you will need and find data sources you can use to assess progress toward your SEL goals.

SOURCE: CASEL

TAGS student assessment define SEL metrics assessment conducting local SEL research continuous improvement implementation evaluation

Youth Participatory Evaluation
Youth Participatory Evaluation is an approach that engages young people in evaluating the programs and systems designed to serve them. This page provides resources and principles that can support districts in working with students in the cycle of continuous improvement.

SOURCE: External website

TAGS toolkit student leadership assessment conducting local SEL research continuous improvement youth voice